3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
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CHAPTER XI

Arts & Crafts

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AS I write there is a church being erected at Kyimbila to seat about seven hundred and fifty people. It has fifteen windows, each with three Gothic arches, and six doors each with its Gothic arch. This work was done, with only amateur supervision, by native workmen, of whom only one has had any kind of training, all the rest being young men, some of whom had never handled a trowel, and the best of them had not had more than a few months now and again at similar work. A good deal of pulling down and rebuilding had to be done, but the building, as it stands, with its buttresses and arched doors and windows, has a dignified and satisfying appearance. The carpentry is being done with the assistance of a trained man from Nyasaland, all the other carpenters being men with a training, or lack of it, similar to that of the bricklayers. The church is cruciform in shape, and the placing of the crown couples, if that is correct designation, was a triumph of ingenuity and patience.

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Now there is nothing in Konde arts and crafts to lead one to think all this a natural development of what they did before. For the remarkable thing

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about these arts and crafts is their failure to develop at all. Hints and suggestions were there continually; yet nothing ever came of them. Iron was digged, smelted, and made into tools, yet no better tool for digging the ironstone itself was thought of than the hoe. Cloth was widely made on native looms before the advent of inferior trade goods, and needles, with eyes, for sewing mats; but the idea of sewn garments did not penetrate the native mind. Burned clay pipes were made to direct the wind from the skin bellows into the blacksmith's fire, but no one received from these pipes a hint of other possibilities. The idea of the wheel, with its boundless possibilities, did not suggest itself to the Konde mind, nor, so far as I know, to the Bantu mind anywhere, although hints of it were lying about, especially in the round tree trunks which were used as rollers when a canoe had to be dragged some distance from the forest to the water.

At every point the native mind seems to have been waiting for the stimulus which was to come with the white man, and which has led to an awakening, the full extent of which is not realized except by thoughtful persons. For already, after the comparatively brief tuitional period of fifty years, Central Africans are replacing Indians as Government clerks, as hospital assistants, as engineers on river steamers, as telegraphists; they do all kinds of printing and bookbinding, carpentry, and building; and they fill positions of trust which a generation ago no one thought they would ever be capable of filling. The Konde have not yet taken more than a small share in